THE

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HEAVENLY MEDITATION,

Reviewed by

RICHARD BAXTER,

At the Invitation of

Mr. *GILES FIRMIN'S* EXCEPTIONS,

In his Book Entituled

The Real Christian.

LONDON,
Printed for *Nevil Simmons*, at the Sign of the three Crowns, near *Holborn* Conduit. 1671.

Dear and much honoured Brother,

I Have lately perused your judicious Treatise called *The Real Christian*, in which you seek to deliver the Church from the danger of the Errors of Mr. *Daniel Pagens*, Mr. *Hooker* Mr. *Shepherd*, and Mr. *Perkins*; (And I think Mr. *Shepherd's Sound Believer* needeth more Medication to make it sound, than you have yet used.) Among the rest, I find you have endeavoured in the End, to save the Church also from the *trouble* and *danger* of my Directions for *Heavenly Meditation* in my *Saints Rest*. And though my own opinion be, that seeing we have formerly had some converse by Writing, it would have been better to have attempted to convince me by Letters, of my Errors, before you had

warned the World to take heed of them, that you might have heard first what I had to say for my self; yet I confess those are punctilio's, not to be stood upon in this age, in which no great exactness of foresight, prudence or justice is to be expected: Nor have I a desire to abridge you of your liberty of speaking as publikely as you have a list. But taking your writings as I find them, I shall take the boldness to tell you, I. How far my judgement doth concurr with yours, which shall be answered by my endeavours: II. How farr I am unsatisfied in your Writings on this point.

I. I am glad, 1. That you are tender of the peace of troubled tender Christians, and would have Ministers take heed lest they should break the bruised reed.

2. I am glad that you would have Ministers accurate in their words and writings, and not by heedless unwarrantable expressions wrong the Church.

3. I am glad that you are sensible that extreams are to be avoided, and that over-doing in doctrines of piety, and pretending to go beyond the Church of God, even farther than God would have us, is one way of injuring truth and piety.

4. I am glad that you are for keeping close to that rule of Truth and duty, and against making a Religion, or any part of it to our selves.

5. I am glad that you are for a free and faithful opening and disowning the Errors and failings of the most esteemed Divines; that weak Christians may not be injured by the reverence of their names. And that you are not of the pernicious opinion of a multitude of Professours of Religiousness in this age, who think that none of their faults or weaknesses should be opened, lest it give matter to their Adversaries to reproach them; and that all that is said against *them*, is said against *Religion*; and that to call them to Repentance, is to disgrace Religion, and to strengthen the hands of wickedness. I am glad that you see the horrid blindness and wickedness of this conceit; and how odious a thing it is to preferr our selfish personal reputation, before the honour of Christ and true Religion; or else to think that it is an honour to Christ and Religion to justifie our sins. I am glad that you have the wisdome of a Christian, rather to disown the Errors of the Godlyest Divines, than to leave it to angry contentious Adversaries to open them in another manner, and to other ends and uses: And that you think not as our selfish blind ones do, that we may dance naked unseen and undisgraced, if we are but in the net of self-flattery; and that angry Adversaries will see none of our errours or faults, unless we tell them of them by our Repentance. In all this, you and I are of a mind.

6. And

6. And in particular, I am afraid as well as you of screwing weak ones too high in this duty of *meditation* on the *Glory of Heaven*. And therefore lest I should injure the weak, or any others, 1. In the Book it self (The *Saints Rest*) I have given the Reader these warnings, Pag. 703. Ed. 9. [*Yet be cautious in understanding this. I know this will not prove every mans duty: some have not themselves and their time at command; and therefore cannot set their hours: such are most servants, and many Children of poor and carnal Parents; and many are so poor that the necessities of their families will deny them this freedome. I do not think it the duty of such, to leave their labours for this work, just at certain set times; no nor for prayer or other necessary worship. No such duty, is a duty at all times: Affirmatives bind not* semper & ad semper. *When two duties come together, and cannot both be performed, it were then a sin to perform the lesser. Of two duties we must chuse the greater* (i. e. consideratis considerandis) *though of two sins we must choose neither. I think such persons were best to be watchful, to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall; and especially to joyne Meditation and Prayer as much as they can with the very labours of their Callings. There is no such enmity between labouring and Meditating, or Praying in the Spirit, but that both may conveniently be done together.* Yet I

say

say, as Paul *in another case, If thou canst be free, use it rather. Those that have more spare time from worldly necessaries, and are Masters to dispose of themselves and their time,* &c.

And pag. 704. [*Just how oft it should be, I cannot determine, because mens several conditions may vary it: But in general, That it be frequent, the Scripture requireth, when it mentioneth meditating continually, or day and night,* Psal. 1. 2. & 119. 97. & 148. 19. *Circumstances of our conditions may much vary the circumstances of our duty. It may be one mans duty to hear, or pray oftner than another; and so it may be in this of Meditation: But for those that can conveniently omit other business, I advise that it be once a day at least*: So also pag. 707. & 709.

And being afraid lest I should injure unable persons, in many books since, I have over and over (lest it should be overlookt) repeated (I feared *ad nauseam Lectoris*) these Cautions; As *Method for Peace of Consc.* p. 12. [*studying and serious meditating be not duties for the deeply Melancholy —— You must let those alone till you are better able to perform them, lest by attempting those duties which you cannot perform, you utterly disable your self from all,* &c.

And I thus conclude my Treat. of *The Divine Life*, [*But now I have given you these few Directions for the improvement of your solitude for converse with God, lest I should occasion the*

hurt of those that are unfit for the Lesson I have given, I must conclude with this caution which I have formerly also published: that it is not Melancholy or Weak headed persons who are not able to bear such exercises, for whom I have written these Directions. Those that are not able to be much in serious solitary thoughtfulness, without confusions and distracting suggestions, and hurrying vexatious thoughts, must fit themselves for the most part to those duties, which are to be done in company by the help of others; and must be very little in solitary duties; For to them whose natural faculties are so diseased and weak it is no duty; as being no means to do them the desired good: But while they strive to do that which they are naturally unable to endure, they will but confound and distract themselves, and make themselves unable for those other duties, which yet they are not utterly unfit for: To such persons therefore instead of ordered, well digested Meditations, and much time spent in secret thoughtfulness, it must suffice that they be brief in secret prayer; and take up with such occasional abrupter Meditations, as they are capable of, and that they be the more in reading, hearing, conference, Praying, and praising God with others, &c.] More such I omit.

I now add more particularly (lest I should injure any.) 1. That I take it not to be the duty of a Minister to leave his necessary Study, Preaching, Prayer, &c. for this set Meditation: 2. Nor for a Magistrate to leave

leave his neceſſary work of Government for it. 3. Nor for any man in an Active life, to leave a neceſſary duty of his place for it: 4. Nor for any weak perſons to ſtretch their braines beyond their abilitie, to do what they cannot do. Greateſt Duties muſt be preferred, and men muſt endeavour prudently according to their capacity and power. And God will have mercy and not ſacrifice and would not have Religion crack our braines, nor turn out our duties towards men, or of our particular Callings.

But for all this I am of the ſame mind expreſſed in the Book which you find fault with. 1. That *Heavenly mindedneſs is eſſential to Holineſs*. 2. That *Heavenly thoughts* or *Meditations*, are much of the *exerciſe* of *Heavenly mindedneſs*. 3. And that it is every mans duty to exerciſe his Thoughts or Meditations in the moſt *clear*, *methodical*, *affecting*, *practical* way that his *Abilities* and *opportunities* (*conſideratis conſiderandis*) *will* reach to. For which uſeful Method I gave the beſt directions I could. But I will not juſtifie my weakneſs, nor deny that it is injurious to the Church of God, nor deny the prehemínence of my Brethrens underſtandings, nor the greater uſefulneſs of their labours. And it is not unlikely that mine may have more faults than I diſcern, which are ſoon diſcerned by more judicious men;

for whose correction I would not be unthankful.

II. And now I shall tell you wherein I differ from you.

1. It seemeth to me unrighteous dealing, when you undertake in Print to save Christians from my Errours, to overpass all the limitations before recited which I gave them; and to carry it as if I had made that *Measure* which you except against, to be *all mens*, or *most mens duty*. Yea not only by your preterition of *my words*, but by *your own*, to perswade the Reader that so indeed it was: When you say, pag. 314. [*This I see is the Meditation strongly urged, upon Christians: A duty very hard I am sure; And if our salvation lie upon this being performed after this manner as this learned and Reverend Author hath set down, then most Christians that I meet with, forty to one, and those whom I esteem good Christians, must never come at Heaven, but must to that dark place.*]

Did you not intimate in these words, that I make it as necessary to salvation as these words import? If so, Truth and Candor should have prevailed with you, to have left out all such passages. You see I make it not so much as a *duty* to any that have not *ability* and *convenience*: much less that the *mode* is of *necessity* to *salvation*.

But yet I must add, that our *Salvation* is not *unconcerned* in *any* of our *duties*, though I will

will not say that our *salvation lyeth on it, so as we must else* be damned.

What if I had given you a scheme of the admirably accurate *Method* of *Prayer*, which is found in the *Lords Prayer*? I would have said that the observation of this *Method* is a *Duty*; and that our salvation is not *unconcerned* in that *duty*: I would have said that all men should do their best to come up to that accurate Method in their Prayers; But so, as not to crack their brains, nor hinder them in the *Matter*, nor neglect any *greater duty*, to do *this*; But with *moderate, just* endeavours, according to their *abilities* and *opportunities*. I would not have said that their salvation so lyeth on it, that none that use not this method can be saved; nor would I be so *rough* and *curst*, (as you speak) to those that cannot use this Method, as to deprive them of their comfort: But I would tell them what is their Rule and pattern. Even so do I in this case of Meditation.

2. And I like not reducing the *Rule* to our impotent sinful *natures*, nor to our *crooked lives*, when our Hearts and lives should be measured by, and reduced to the *Rule*. I grant that not *one of forty* doth Pray in the *Method* of the Lords prayer: no not of *Godly People*, no nor *Ministers*; no not in their *studied Liturgies*. What then? Is it therefore *no duty*, because few perform it?

Were it not enough to have ſaid that methodical, ſet Meditation is a *high pitch of duty*, which every *weak Chriſtian* cannot reach; or which *few* can reach; or that it is not ſo much as a *duty to all*, as to the circumſtances of Time, *&c?* As I like not the Papiſts making Gods Law imperfect, that they may make *man perfect*, and *ſin Veniall*, or *Univocally no ſin*; ſo I as little like it in our ſelves, to ſay that *Duty*, is *no Duty*, and ſo deny the *perfection* of the *Law*, becauſe that every one cannot reach it, and few good people perform it. God forbid I ſhould deny all *duty* which few good people perform, any more than juſtifie all ſin which *moſt*, or *all*, good People commit.

3. You ſay [*If I ſhould humbly deſire a Text or two from Holy Writ, to prove that is the Meditation that God requireth of Chriſtians; if the Reverend Author will anſwer me, it is a ridiculous queſtion, (as he hath ſaid in another caſe,) I muſt be ſilent.*]

Anſw. The caſe which I call *ridiculous*, you vainly ſilence, ſeeing any underſtanding Reader (at leaſt of the Book you blame) will ſee it: They were ridiculous *Sectaries*, *Seekers*, and ſuch like, that I then had to do with: If you, or your moſt skilful Caſuiſt whom you mention, had called for a Text of Scripture to prove that we muſt *pray twice a day in our families*, its like I ſhould have

have given you more Reverent language: though I had thought never the better of the Queſtion: nor do I think ſure that you can judge it ever the leſs a duty, becauſe your Father uſed it not (which yet I think you were not obliged to have ſo far told the world.) But why did you not candidly recite thoſe reaſonings, by which in that place I manifeſted the queſtion to be *ridiculous?* Nay doth not your ſaying that *if I do but ſay* [*It is ridiculous, you muſt be ſilent*] imply that *I do but barely ſay ſo?* I will not injure the Reader by the tedious recitation of my words. But to your ſelf I may ſay, I ſuppoſe you are not for *Veronius* new way of arguing from expreſs Texts of Scripture containing both propoſitions: If you are, I referr you to *Vedelius* his *Rationale, Theolog.* but ſpecially to *Dalleus, de fidei ex Script. demonſt. Part.* 1. *Cap.* 10, 11, 12, 13.

1. To prove *Meditation* or *frequent Meditation day and night* a duty, is needleſs; You confeſs it. 2. To prove *Methodical Meditation* a duty to them that have Ability and opportunity, it ſufficeth to cite, 1 Cor. 14. 26. 40. *Let all things be done to edifying, and in Order*; that is, *Right* order, not *Wrong*: and that is, *Method.* But whether *this* or *that Method* be really *true* and moſt orderly and *edifying*, you need not the words of Scripture to tell you: That *Cogitationes, judicia & verba, rebus ſunt aptanda*; that the

the *Verity* of *Judgement* and *Speech* lyeth in their *Congruity to things*] are points known by the Light of Reaſon, and you ſhould not call for a Text to prove them. The Light of nature is not contemptible: The Law of Nature is Gods Law. If Scripture had never ſpoke it, yet by the Law of Nature it had been a duty to do all things in *Order* and to *Edifying*. What is *Orderly*, the *Nature* of the ſubject meditated on, with the end, will declare.

Preaching is the expreſſing of thoſe thoughts to others, which by meditation we exerciſe for our ſelves. Therefore if it may be known what is *Orderly Preaching*, by the agreeableneſs of the *expreſſions* to the *matter* in order to the true *End*, then ſo it may be in *Meditation*, which is a Preaching to our ſelves. Therefore that *Explication* and *Confirmation* ſhould go before *Application*, that *Examination* ſhould be furthered by *Signes*, that *Reproof* ſhould be furthered by *Aggravations* of ſin, that *Exhortation* ſhould be furthered by *Motives*, that *Practice* ſhould be helped by *Directions*, the *nature of the thing* doth prove: And you may as well call for a Text of Scripture for moſt points in Metaphyſicks, or Phyſicks, or Logick, as for theſe.

Meditation ſhould be done *in Order to Edification*: But *Order to Edification* (in them that have *Ability*, and *Opportunity*) requireth that

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Understanding go first, *application* after, and that the application intended be furthered with convenient helps, as aforesaid. Therefore *Meditation* should be done in *this order, &c.*

The Major is found in Nature and Scripture: The Minor is a naturally-known truth, exemplified throughout the Scripture, which is written in that Method (and in all Theological writings) And yet must you have a Text for the Conclusion?

As for Family Prayer I have by me a long Disputation which I think fully proveth it to be a duty; and to most Christian families twice a day. But if the *Law of nature* must make up neither *Major* nor *Minor*, but you must have the *Conclusion* in express Texts of Scripture, its like if you saw it, you would not be satisfied with it: But it satisfyeth me, as very full proof. But so that there also I believe not that there are no exceptions: Or that no family may have business so urgent as to exempt them from this as a duty; or that all families are bound to the same hours, or the same proportion of time.

I will not tell you that it is *ridiculous* to ask what Text of Scripture maketh it a mans duty, to give meat to his family twice a day: (with the other instances which I laid down.) But if those *ridiculi capita* that then thus pleaded against family Prayer did ask me the same question again, I would tell *them* so.

And I would think this argument might prove a Divine obligation.

[*God requireth us to give food to our Families* (*if we are able and have opportunity*) *as oft as is for the benefit or neceſſity of their natures. But it is for the benefit and neceſſity of their natures to have food twice a day,* (*ordinarily, and as to moſt perſons:*) *Therefore God requireth us to give food, to moſt families, and ordinarily, twice a day.* Or ſuppoſe I put in but *once* at leaſt, if you think I cannot prove the *twice.*

I am not now determining whether *family prayer* muſt be as oft, but whether this arguing be faulty for want of a Concluſion in the words of a Text of Scripture. I think that Scripture is ſo admirably ſuited to the *Nature* of things, that the farr greateſt part of its precepts are found alſo in the true Law of nature; And that even moſt of the *Goſpel precepts* may be called, (ſuppoſing the *Hiſtory and Doctrine*) *Lex naturæ lapſæ reparandæ, a Law ſuited to Natures reparation.*

4. But I am utterly ignorant of your meaning, when you ſay, that *they that can Meditate thus ten hours,* &c. *are the happier men, and have great cauſe to bleſs God for ſuch a mercy.* Either you take it to be a *Duty* to ſuch men (to any men) or, no duty: If you take it to be their (or any mens) duty, then 1. You would not call for a Text of Scripture to

prove it a duty. 2. Nor you would not pretend to differ from me; For I know your Candour abhorreth calumny; And therefore (notwithstanding your forementioned unhandsome intimations) I suppose it is none of your purpose to perswade your Reader that I make it a duty *for all men*, and you only for *some?* For as your *Piety* and your *friendship* satisfie me that you have no such intent, so I know you would discern it to be against the interest of your *own reputation*, which would suffer when the contrary is seen in my writings. Therefore I cannot understand whether you take it to be *any mans* duty.

And if not, then you seem to hold the Popish doctrine of *Evangelical Councils* of *perfection*, and of *works* of *supererrogation* or *perfection* which are *no duties*. Which yet I will not believe you hold, till I needs must; And therefore having no third exposition of your words, I must leave them all as unintelligible to me.

If you should say that my Limitations are not in the same Book (the *Saints Rest*) where the Duty is described, I should answer, 1. That is not so; They are in the same. 2. He that confuteth a man twenty years after his Writings are published, is obliged to take notice of what he hath written since; Else if a man reform or correct his own Writings it will signifie nothing; but others are ob-

liged to do it ſtill, as ſuppoſing it undone. 2. And this Book of yours is not in the ſame Volume as my ſuppoſed Errour is: Therefore if my *own* will not ſerve turn, becauſe they are not the ſame Book, neither will yours.

Or may I doubt leſt you did for want of leiſure, confound the ſeveral parts of my Writing? And take that which I wrote of the common neceſſity of a Heavenly mind, or of Meditation of Heaven, to be written alſo to prove or urge the ſame neceſſity of the *Length or Method?* No; I muſt not be ſo injurious to you; For though you are not obliged to read my writings till you *underſtand* them; yet I know you cannot forget that you are obliged to *underſtand them*, if they are intelligible, before you *deliberately* oppoſe them. Therefore I have no way left but to conclude, that you are not intelligible to me.

3. What I have ſaid all this while of the *Method*, I ſay alſo of the *Time* of *Meditation*, which is part of your exception.

It is a duty to ſpend ſo much Time in Meditation as is beſt to Edification to attain its End. But to them that have Ability and opportunity, at leaſt a quarter or half an hour, if not more, is beſt to Edification to attain the End. Therefore to ſuch it is a duty to ſpend ſo much time herein.

I will

I will give you no Text of Scripture for the Concluſion, nor for the Minor. The nature of the thing, and common experience proveth it.

Chriſts Sermons recited in Scripture ſeem to be very ſhort: You may call for a Text now to prove it a duty that a Sermon or Prayer ſhould be an hour or a quarter of an hour long. It is enough that I prove it from the Aptitude of the Means to its end. Experience telleth us, that very few words and ſhort time ſerve not to inform mens underſtandings. And after that, the Will and Affections muſt have time to be duly excited, and reſolved; And more time is neceſſary yet to drive the nail to the head, and to ſettle the ſoul againſt the force of all objections that may be produced to the contrary; And yet more time to ſettle it in the right *way* of Practice. In a word, If *ſhort* and *ſeldome Preaching* to *others*, be all that is any Preachers duty, murmur not that you are ſilenced, but write to Miniſters to ſpare the Biſhops the labour and *odium*, and to ſilence themſelves, as to their long unneceſſary Sermons.

If you ſay that Preaching is more of *Divine Inſtitution* than *Meditation*, I deny it. There is here no *magis or minus*: If God have inſtituted both, it cannot be ſaid that he hath inſtituted one more than the other; Though

Though it may be ſaid that one (which ever it is) be of greater neceſſity than the other. And though I confeſs that he that Preacheth to himſelf, may omit and abbreviate much, which muſt be diſtinctly expreſſed to others, yet that doth but ſhew that *Preaching* muſt ordinarily be longer than ſuch *ſet meditations*; but not that theſe alſo muſt not have that Time, which Method and the Ends require, when it may be ſo done.

Do you not think it as preſumptuous to define the Time of a mans *Conference* about Scripture, with his Children and Servants daily, as to define the time of his Meditation? I ſuppoſe you will judge the caſe much like. Suppoſe then that I ſhould ſay to a Maſter of a Family, [*Beſides your little occaſional reflections, you that have Ability and Opportunity may do well (yea muſt take it for your duty) oft times (even once a day, if no greater duty hinder you) to ſet ſome time apart to ſpeak Methodically and ſeriouſly to your Families, firſt by way of explication and then of Application to convince them, and reſolve them, and to drive all home to Practice*, &c.] Would you call for a Text to prove this a duty? I would give you then, *Deut.* 6. 7, 8, 9. *&* *Deut.* 11. 18, 19, 20. for the Major; *Ye ſhall teach them your Children, ſpeaking of them when thou ſitteſt in thy houſe*, &c. With *Gen.* 18. 19. *&* 1 *Cor.* 14. 26, 40.

26, 40. And the Minor I would prove by the Light of Nature and experience. The caſe is the ſame in the main, as to the exhorting of our ſelves.

Truly, Brother, if your ſoul be not much more Heavenly than mine, it needeth a conſiderable time of holy exerciſe, to habituate it to converſe above; and to bring it to the benefits of Meditation which we muſt deſire. As I cannot get me heat with walking, no nor running neither, by the *violence* of the motion alone, unleſs I *continue* ſome conſiderable time; no more can I in Prayer and *Meditation*; though my lazy humour too oft inclineth me, to ſit down and content my ſelf with a ſhort *Cogitation* or wiſh; (Like the Prayers of thoſe that waſh them and button their Doublets and interpoſe other talk, and yet pray on.) And the warmth which I have once got, is quickly abated, if I give over the duty, and be ſhort and ſeldome in it. Short and ſeldome thoughts of Heaven, will not ſerve with ſo bad a heart as mine, to keep up the Habit, much leſs to *exerciſe* a Heavenly mind, in that degree as all true Chriſtians muſt confeſs deſirable. And I ſuppoſe God hath therefore appointed us ſuch variety of Ordinances and helpes, and ſuch long and frequent uſe of them in their ſeveral turnes and times, which prophane men count but unneceſſary preciſeneſs, that

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ſo our hearts may be habituated to a holy and Heavenly frame, by the frequent and much uſe of holy and Heavenly exerciſes. For ſurely we add nothing unto God, nor do we change him, by our words or hours of Religious exerciſe; But we wait for his grace in the uſe of thoſe means, which tend to prepare us both for Grace and Glory. And by the ſame reaſonings as you will ſhift off, or ſhuffle this Meditation into ſome curſory thoughts on the by, the world would do ſo by Prayer, Preaching, Holy Conferences, Sacraments, and all Religion.

But that ſeveral men muſt allow ſeveral proportions of Time for this duty, and that all cannot allow it the ſame Time, again I ſay, I will not ſuſpect you to ſuppoſe and affirme me to deny.

6. Another thing that you oft mention is, that I ſay, *Other thoughts ſhould not be intermixt.* And without giving you a Text for the Concluſion, the ſame kind of arguing will prove this, as proved the reſt: Adding *Eccleſ.* 9. 10. and ſuch like. If a man have *Ability* and *Opportunity*, will not attending wholly to the work in hand, beſt *Edifie* him and further the ſucceſs? If not, intermix other thoughts alſo with your greateſt ſtudies, your Prayers, your Preaching, and do all *diviſo vel præ-occupato animo.* Let the People

People when you are preaching to them, talk in the Church to one another. Reprove them not for thinking of other things. Or give them a Text of Scripture for the Concluſion, ſaying you may not think or talk of other matters at Sermon time.

If you ſay, that Meditation is not to be a *ſet duty* as *Preaching* is, and therefore may lawfully be interrupted; I anſwer, If it be a *duty* commanded of the ſame God, it muſt in its place be regulated by the ſame General Laws, Let all be done to Edifying and in order. For my part, intermixing thoughts do hinder the ſucceſs with me; But what they may do with ſtronger heads and better hearts I know not.

You ſay, p. 320. [*But when I come to impoſe duties, as Meditation, &c. upon Chriſtians to be performed by them in ſuch a manner, and for ſuch a time, and their ſoundneſs or unſoundneſs, ſeriouſneſs or ſleightneſs is determined according to their performance according to that manner which I ſet down, ſurely I had need bring clear Scripture proof.*——

Anſw. But if there be no word in my Writings that ſay any ſuch things as determining of ſoundneſs or unſoundneſs by that *manner* of performance, what do you think the Reader that tryeth it, will think and ſay

of you, and of ſuch paſſages as theſe? I will not tell you leſt I offend you. But only I tell you, This is not well done: And you had need to have proved what you intimate by ſome clear words of mine, if you would be believed.

But *p.* 319. you argue *à fine & effectu*, and ſay that *Meditation is then rightly performed when the affections are wrought up unto a ſuitableneſs with the Object I am Meditating on —— Now let this Meditation be performed how it will, let it be in what length or ſhortneſs of time, what is that to the eſſence of the duty.*

Anſw. 1. But, do you regard nothing in duty but the Eſſence? Nothing at all the *Integrity*? Nothing the *Degree*? Why theſe alſo are *Duty*. He that bindeth us to Sacrifice forbiddeth us to offer the halt and the blind and requireth the beſt we have.

2. How happy a heart have you, that will ſo eaſily be got up to a *ſuitableneſs* to God and Heaven! Is it not *you* now that forget the caſe of weak Chriſtians? Verily ſuch hearts as mine will need more adoe. It is not [*performing Meditation how it will, in ſhortneſs*] that will ſerve the turn, to bring my heart to ſuch a ſuitableneſs. And I doubt all the weak ones whoſe caſe you ſeem to plead, are not much better.

3. This

3. This ſavoureth much like the ſaying of a late Learned Phyſicion of ours, that ſaid, *What need all this adoe in Preaching and talking of Religion, when all is diſpatcked in three words, Think well*, and *Speak well*, and *Do well*. O but a great many words are neceſſary to bring us up to theſe three things: And ſo are a great many *thoughts* to bring our hearts to a *ſuitableneſs* to *God*, to *Chriſt*, to *Heaven*. Tell me if you can, why the ſame arguing is not as ſtrong againſt *long Conference*, or long Preaching? All that Sermons and Conference are to do is, to bring up our hearts to a ſuitableneſs to the Object: And if this will be done by one *ſentence*, what needs there a quarter of an houres Preaching or Catechiſing or Diſcourſe: (And ſo away with this Preaching office:) But it is a falſe ſuppoſition that *one ſentence will do this*, ſo well as more.

4. And when I think my heart is ſomewhat well affected, there is much yet to be done, to fix, and ſettle, and habituate, and direct it, which may be loſt by haſty breaking off, and ſlubbering over ſo great a buſineſs.

One work of Meditation is ſelf-examination. I may ſay as you, If I can but know my ſpiritual ſtate, *Let examination be performed how it will for length or ſhortneſs, what's that to the eſſence of the duty?* But it is not ſuch

performance that will acquaint me with my Condition. If I have not Time to conſider of Evidences, and then of my heart and life, &c. yea and this with ſerious uninterrupted thoughts, it will not do. I could put off Religious exerciſes as curſorily as another, if curſory brevity would attain the end, and ſerve turn with ſuch a heart as mine.

But by all this, I conjecture, that you will be a gentle cenſurer of Miniſters that Preach ſhort and ſeldome, and of Parents that are ſhort and ſeldome in family inſtructions, and of all Chriſtians that are ſo in their Religious Conferences, unleſs your Cenſures bear no due proportion among themſelves.

7. But yet you have ſomewhat to ſay of the Object of Meditation, *The Joyes of Heaven*, p. 315. and ſay [*It muſt be ſuppoſed as they muſt have a title to Heaven, ſo they muſt know and be aſſured of that Title to Heaven; there muſt be no dark cloud, &c.*]

Anſw. Now I perceive we differ indeed. Do you think that neither *unconverted*, nor *unaſſured* doubting perſons, are called to Meditate much of Heaven? I think that none have greater *need*, and that nothing will be more powerful to do their work.

8. That Meditation is moſt profitable to the unconverted which tendeth moſt to bring

bring their hearts to the Love of God. But the Meditation of the Infinite Goodneſs of God revealed in the Heavenly Glory, and offered to all, tendeth moſt to bring their hearts to the Love of God, —— *Ergo* ——

That which repreſenteth God moſt amiable tendeth moſt to bring the ſoul to Love him. But the explication of the Heavenly Glory where he is enjoyed in the fulleſt Love, repreſenteth God moſt amiable —— *Ergo* ——

2. That Meditation is moſt profitable to the unconverted, which tendeth moſt to deſtroy all carnal concupiſcence and worldly Love, by drawing their hearts to better things. But ſuch is the Meditation of Everlaſting Glory —— *Ergo* ——

3. That Meditation is moſt profitable to a ſinners Converſion, which draweth him moſt effectually to conſent to the Covenant of Grace (For that conſent is Converſion.) But ſuch is the Meditation of the Heavenly felicity —— *Ergo* ——

4. That Meditation is moſt profitable which tendeth moſt to make men Repent of ſin, and be fully willing of a holy life. But ſuch is the Meditation of Heaven (when they ſee what ſin depriveth men of, and what they are like to get by Holineſs) ——

5. That Meditation is moſt profitable to converſion, which fullyeſt ſheweth men the excellency of Chriſt and of all his Grace. But ſuch is the Meditation of Heaven, (as being the higheſt benefit of Chriſt and Grace)—*Ergo*——

6. That Meditation is moſt profitable to the wicked, which tendeth moſt to ſave them from Temptations: But ſuch is the Meditation of Heaven, (as ſetting that in the ballance which alone can weigh down all that can be offered by the tempter)——.

7. That is the moſt profitable Meditation which is exerciſed on *God* in his fulleſt Revelation—— But, *&c.*

8. That is the moſt profitable and powerful Meditation which is about the *ultimate* End; Becauſe that it is the End that is Loved for it ſelf, and all means but for the End: And the End guideth us in the choiſe, the eſtimation and the uſe of means, and is the very life of them all—— But, *&c.*—— *Ergo.*

John Preached the Kingdom of Heaven, more expreſly than the Perſon of the Meſſiah: And Chriſt ſent his Diſciples to Preach the *Kingdom of God*, when he forbad them to tell men that he was the *Chriſt*, (becauſe the Miracles, Reſurrection, and other Proofs of it, muſt *firſt be made*, and *then be Preached* to win belief) *Luke* 9. 2, 21. And by the

Kingdom

Kingdom of God he meant that of *Grace*, as related to *Glory*, verſ. 27, 28.

It is the want of thinking more ſeriouſly what *Heaven is*, and the certainty of it to all believers, that cauſeth men to follow the fleſh and world, and to loſe it by contempt or groſs neglect. Ungodlineſs conſiſteth much in a neglect of Heaven, for want of convincing, quickning Meditations of it. And when you bring a ſinner to be but ſoberly *thoughtful* of *Heaven*, you have done much towards his true Converſion. So that in this, you and I do vaſtly differ, if you think as you write.

I will crave your pardon for my over-paſſing all the reſt of your oppoſition (ſuppoſing that I have ſpoken to the main,) and ſhall ſhut up all with theſe three profeſſions and admonitions to the Reader.

I. Since I find that this judicious worthy man hath made theſe exceptions, I have conſidered again whether there be not cauſe. And I find what long agoe I found, that I was too blame that I obſerved no more the weakneſs and danger of melancholy perſons, when I firſt wrote it; and that I was not more large in diſſwading them from taking that to be their work which they cannot do. For I believe I have ſpoken with farr more than ever this Reverend Brother hath done (though he be a Phyſician) who have

been

been disabled by Melancholy and other weakness of brain from this work: which made me so oft since give them such warning. And I do here again desire, most Women and all Melancholy persons, to take up more with shorter and occasional Meditations, and with such holy thoughts as good Books and Conference do more easily bring into their minds; and not to over-stretch their brains, by striving to do more than they are able, and so disable themselves yet more.

II. The review of these things doth convince me, that Learned men, and all men of *Opportunity* and *Ability* to bear Meditation, should use this duty much more than they do; And that much of our ignorance, unbelief, ungodliness and uncomfortableness is for want of making a set and serious business of it. And I think that few men that Labour in their Shops, or ever walk or travel abroad, can truly say, that they are wholly destitute of leisure. And I think that poverty and crosses in the world, should make the thoughts of Heaven the more welcome to them; And that it should be so farr from being taken for an ungrateful burden, that it should be the sweetest pleasure in this World; and farr more delightful, than to think of Lands or dearest Friends. And I admonish all that have *Ability* and *Opportunity* to take heed lest

short

ſhort and ſeldome and ſlight thoughts of Heaven, do harden them in that unacquaintedneſs above, which will be the unholineſs of their lives, and their terrour at death.

III. Though I ſaid it not before, I will now ſay, that even *Methodical Heavenly* Meditation is a *Duty* to all that have the free uſe of Reaſon; But not a Duty which they are preſently fit, and able to performe; And therefore it is (as the Sacrament to the unprepared) a *mediate* duty: They ſin in not doing it, becauſe they ſin in being *unprepared* for it. But yet it is not Immediately to be done, till ſhorter and eaſier Meditations have firſt prepared them. But Gods Law ceaſeth not to be perfect becauſe we are imperfect, nor to oblige us to duty, becauſe we are morally undiſpoſed. I will not ſay, The higheſt forme in the School muſt not Learn Greek, becauſe the loweſt are unfit for it; nor that the loweſt are not Mediately to be brought up to it. It is every weak Chriſtians ſin, that he *Prayeth* not Methodically, becauſe his diſability is ſinful; though it be a ſin that God forgiveth to all that are ſincere. But as I will not be one that ſhall rob the ſincere of the comfort of that forgiveneſs, ſo neither will I be one that ſhall perſwade them to impenitence by ſaying, *It is no ſin*, nor accuſe Gods Law of imperfection.

Understand and Practise these two Texts, and I desire no more of you as to this meditation; Matth. 6. 21. *Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.* Phil. 3. 20. *Our Conversation is in Heaven.* The Lord forgive my neglect of this duty, and yet help me to perform it, with more Heavenly *Life, and Light, and Love*, till I shall be above the Life of Faith.

IV. Not medling now with the reasons of other men, against either Method or length of Prayer, Preaching, or heavenly Meditation, my own sad experience commandeth me to give this caution to all Christians, with a special earnestness; Take heed of a slothful omission or cursory performance of such holy duties; lest when you have lost the Life and Sweetness of them, you lose next the sense and belief of their excellency and necessity. When you cannot perswade *your self* to them, you will be much more unapt to perswade *others* to them. And when you have suffered your hearts to grow indifferent to them, you will too easily be drawn to take them for things that are indifferent. Practice helpeth us to an experience and taste of the goodness of Duty, which will do more to draw us to it, than bare reasoning alone will do. And when Practice is neglected, Love, willingness and pleasure first abateth; and next the Understand-

ſtanding it ſelf is in danger of judging it no better or more neceſſary than we feel it.

For my own part, when my Conſcience commandeth me to omit Meditation, becauſe of ſome greater and more urgent duty, forbidding it at that time, I uſually find that it is my affliction to fall under any ſuch diverſions, that both may not be done. And I find that whatever elſe I think of, of Chriſt, of Scripture, of Promiſes, of Threatnings, of ſin, of Grace, &c. if I leave out *Heaven* and make it not the chief part of my Meditation, I leave out the ſence and Life of all. Thence muſt I fetch my Light, or I muſt be in Darkneſs; Thence muſt I fetch my Life, or I muſt be Dead, and my *Motives* or I muſt be Dull, or not ſincere; and my daily Comforts, or I muſt be uncomfortable or worſe. My Hearing, and Reading, and Studies grow to Common things, if Heaven be not the principal part. My life groweth towards a common and a carnal Life, when I begin to leave out Heaven: Death groweth terrible to my thoughts, and Eternity ſtrange and dreadful to me, if I live not in ſuch frequent and ſerious thoughts of the Heavenly Glory, as may render it familiar and grateful to my ſoul. Yea I cannot think with any ſuch *Knowledge, Love* or *Pleaſure*, of the ever-bleſſed God himſelf, if I think of him only as he is revealed to us

in this World, and not as we shall see him in the World of Light. I find my self but a common man, if Heavenliness make me not to differ: And I find my self unfit to Live or to Die, and that my soul is void of the true Consolation, that is needful both in Life and at Death, when I grow a stranger to Heavenly Thoughts, and consequently to Heavenly Affections: And that as nothing will serve turn instead of Heaven to be my Happiness; so nothing will serve turn instead of Heaven to make up the end of my Religion, and forme my Heart and Life to Holiness. And therefore by experience I counsel all Christians that are able to perform it, especially Ministers, and Learned men, to be much in the serious fore-thoughts of Heaven, and to *Comfort themselves* and others with these words, that *We shall for ever be with the Lord.* 1 Thess. 4. 18.

And I adjure the Reader, not to conceive of the worthy person to whom I write this, as any Adversary to a Heavenly Life: For he is a sober, Godly, faithful Minister (though silenced) who hath been in New *England*, and brought back with him a great deal of Judgement and Moderation, in Church-matters, as having seen the experience of the evil of extreams, (as his former Writings witness.) And as he opposeth not Mr. *Rogers*, *Hooker*,

Hooker, *Shephard*, out of any ill-will to their Perſons, but leſt thoſe whom he beſt loved ſhould wrong the Church, ſo I have reaſon to believe that he doth with the ſame Candour, deal with me. And if we do differ at all (which I am not ſure of) it is ſo little as is not like to cauſe the leaſt diſaffection. I would all our differences made no wider a diſtance than is betwixt this faithful Brother and Me.——

Octob. 1.
1670.

FINIS.